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# U.S. plans surrogate warfare

***"Low-intensity conflict" doctrine means helping anti-communist forces around the world confront Soviet allies and clients.***

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WASHINGTON — The Reagan administration is making Central America the experimental battleground for an evolving military doctrine that policy-makers say could become nearly as important to U.S. military planning — and spending — as the 40-year-old concept of nuclear deterrence.

The doctrine, known as Low-Intensity Conflict (LIC), foresees aiding anti-communist forces throughout the world as a way of confronting the Soviet Union without committing U.S. troops to combat. The U.S. Navy calls the concept "violent peace."

In the short term, strategists hope LIC will enable anti-communist forces to defeat pro-Soviet governments in Afghanistan, Angola and Nicaragua. The long-term objective is more dramatic: turning back the Soviet Union's efforts to extend its influence in the Third World.

The doctrine amounts to a tit-for-tat response to the Soviet policy of encouraging so-called wars of national liberation in Third World countries, strategists say.

LIC strategists say the doctrine is an acknowledgment that the enemy's methods are worth copying. A 1,000-page, two-volume discussion of the doctrine prepared by the State Department, Pentagon and CIA quotes such noted Communist strategists as China's Mao Tse-tung, Cuba's Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Vietnam's Vo Nguyen Giap, whose defeat of French forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 marked the end of French rule in Southeast Asia.

Planners say they will consider LIC successful if anti-communist forces in El Salvador and Nicaragua achieve or are well on their way to achieving victory before President Reagan's term ends in January 1989.

"I believe the stakes in Central America are huge and historic," CIA Director William J. Casey, one of the administration's chief LIC theorists, said Sept. 18 in a speech at the University Club in Washington.

"The pendulum of history slowly but surely is swinging away from Soviet Marxism as a model for Third World countries, and toward the concepts of democracy and free-market economics. This role reversal could turn out to be one of the great historical turning points of our lifetime."

As outlined by administration officials and studies, specific LIC proposals include:

- Creating a joint civilian-military, low-intensity-conflict agency to coordinate political, economic, diplomatic and military aid to anti-communist groups and governments. A high-level official, such as a unified LIC commander or assistant secretary for LIC, would oversee the aid programs.

- Granting anti-communist rebels, such as the Nicaraguan contras, such status as diplomatic recognition to make them appear more powerful and organized.

- Compelling the forces that get U.S. help to undertake democratic reforms to try to win the hearts and minds of populations in contested areas. The program also would call for training U.S.-supported forces to respect human rights, to care for refugees and enemy casualties, and not to steal supplies.

- Designing simple weapons for use in Third World conflicts, similar to the Soviet-designed AK-47 rifle and the Soviets' SA-7 surface-to-air missile.

- Developing plans that would avoid the use of U.S. ground troops, but allow for air strikes and naval bombardment by U.S. forces in support of an insurgency or government.

The strategy also foresees an expanded role for the U.S. Army Special Forces — the Green Berets — giving them the lead role in training or limited intervention on behalf of a foreign anti-communist force.

Another LIC goal would be to persuade U.S. public opinion to accept protracted warfare in the Third World and inevitable American involvement for years to come, perhaps well into the 21st century.

Pentagon studies say that, under the LIC theory, psychological warfare probably is more important than actual combat.

"In low-intensity conflict, the antagonist who is most effective in conducting PSYOP [psychological operations] generally will prevail," said the August State Department-Pentagon-CIA report on LIC.

The report recommended that U.S.-supported troops or insurgents provide entertainment such as "fairs, dances, street parties, rallies and musical events" in areas that they control.

A trial operation recently carried out in a Salvadoran village featured clowns, a Mexican mariachi band and dancers in skimpy costumes.

Administration officials and documents from the Pentagon, the State Department and other federal agencies say Central America has become the laboratory for the new concept because the conflicts there represent two different aspects of the doctrine.

In El Salvador, a U.S.-allied regime is fighting a communist insurgency advised and supplied by the Soviet bloc. In Nicaragua, a Soviet-backed regime is battling an insurgency advised and supplied by the United States.

An administration official familiar with contra affairs said that for the LIC concept to work in Nicaragua, the contras must seize a chunk of territory and seek U.S. diplomatic recognition. At that time, he said, Washington would break relations with Managua and begin shipping supplies directly to "liberated" contra territory.

LIC, under scrutiny since Reagan took office in 1981, still is in its infancy as formal policy. At a recent Pentagon briefing, a military officer described LIC as an "evolving blueprint."

Nevertheless, all the American military services have been incorporating LIC theory into combat manuals, while the State Department, Pentagon and CIA produced the first comprehensive study of the subject, titled the "Joint Low-Intensity Conflict Project."

Volume 1, "Analytical Review of Low-Intensity Conflict," was released last month. Volume 2 is classified top secret.

The study took six months to prepare and was based on contributions from 85 U.S. military officers and civilian combat planners as well as the proceedings of a special LIC conference at Fort McNair in Washington Jan. 14-15, which was attended by 275 active-duty and retired military officers.

"Low-intensity conflict is neither war nor peace," the study said. "It is an improbable compilation of dissimilar phenomena that, like the Cheshire cat which seems to fade in and out as you look at it, leaving only its mocking smile, bedevils efforts at comprehension."